

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1 - 8. (canceled)

1 9. (original) An apparatus for heat-treating a steel
2 workpiece, the apparatus comprising:
3 a longitudinally extending furnace;
4 partition means subdividing an interior of the furnace
5 into two longitudinally extending and transversely adjacent zones;
6 means for heating one of the zones to a substantially
7 higher treatment temperature than the other of the zones; and
8 transport means for conveying the workpiece
9 longitudinally through the furnace with a region of the workpiece
10 moving exclusively through the one zone and another region of the
11 workpiece moving exclusively through the other of the zones such
12 that the regions are heated to different temperatures.

1 10. (original) The heat-treatment apparatus defined in
2 claim 9 wherein the partition means includes a longitudinally
3 extending upper partition above the transport means and a
4 longitudinally extending lower partition below the transport means
5 and vertically aligned with the upper partition, the upper and
6 lower partitions defining a transversely open gap through which the
7 transport means extends.

1 11. (original) The heat-treatment apparatus defined in
2 claim 10 wherein at least one of the partitions is displaceable
3 transversely through a plurality of different transversely offset
4 positions.

1 12. (original) The heat-treatment apparatus defined in
2 claim 11 wherein there are a plurality of the lower partitions
3 transversely offset from each other and the upper partition is
4 displaceable transversely through positions aligned with each of
5 the lower partitions.

1 13. (original) The heat-treatment apparatus defined in
2 claim 12 wherein the partition means includes
3 a middle longitudinally extending partition aligned
4 vertically between the upper and lower partitions, the transport
5 means displacing the middle partition through the furnace with the
6 workpiece.